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From: Eoc, Epahq
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Subject: EOC Spot Report: Chemical Spill, Charleston WV – Update #24

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EOC Spot Report: Chemical Spill, Charleston WV – Update #24

US Environmental Protection Agency

Report as of 1630 February 1, 2014

Overview: On January 10, 2014 the President approved an Emergency Declaration for the State of West Virginia after a chemical, 4-methylcyclohexanemethanol, (MCHM) leaked at a Freedom Industries chemical plant and into the Elk River in Charleston, WV. The spill occurred near the Kanawha Valley Water Treatment Plant which detected the chemical even after an increased carbon treatment effort was put in place. Freedom Industries is working to clean up the spill at the facility and in the river.

State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions: West Virginia water authorities issued a “Do Not Use Water Notice” for 10 counties and the President’s Emergency Declaration covers eight counties. West Virginia American Water Company (WVAWC) customers were told not to use tap water for drinking, cooking, washing, or bathing. Water could be used for toilets and fire emergencies. When the incident originally occurred, it contaminated drinking water for 300,000 people. The emergency declaration was closed on January 20, 2014.

The facility is deepening the intercept trench by the river and installing a water collection system. The section of the trench adjacent to the river slope was excavated to native soil. A Region 3 OSC reported that the facility continues to pump water from outside of the secondary containment area. The water level in the interceptor trench was overflowing into the newly dug extension of the trench but increased pumping reduced the water level. Trench boxes that support the trench walls were installed to allow access to the trench and the excavated pipe. CEC collected samples from the end of the pipe, with EPA and the plaintiff representative receiving split samples. A camera was run into the downhill and uphill portions of the pipe and it was discovered that the pipe stops on both sides of the trench. WVDEP is considering a plan to place concrete on the northern end of the interceptor trench and to hand dig around the debris that is blocking the uphill section of excavated pipe.

During the 1/29 excavation a pipe was inadvertently broken. The pipe, approximately 8 inches in diameter, was discharging water at a rate of approximately 1/4 gal/min and had a slight odor of MCHM. The pipe appears to be an intake line from the river for a former fire suppression system. WVDEP, EPA, the facility and the plaintiff's expert are collecting water samples for analysis. Pumping operations on the trench will continue to prevent flow into the River.

Boom maintenance continues with the warming weather. Ice is being broken up between the absorbent and skirted boom. Additional boom has been placed in the northern third of the property line where work continues in area that seeps are most likely to occur.

The facility's remediation consultant, CEC, continues to redevelop the monitoring wells for groundwater sampling scheduled for next week. CEC collected water samples from a sump outside of the secondary containment wall, with WVDEP and the plaintiff representatives receiving split samples. CEC also collected a seep sample from the north end of the rubble/debris slope but due to limited volume, there was no split samples.

OSHA was onsite monitoring work safety.

EPA Action:

The local media reported that a Marshall University professor found formaldehyde in a drinking water sample from a restaurant in Charleston, WV. EPA continues to leave messages for the Marshall University professor who reported formaldehyde in a drinking water sample from a restaurant in Charleston, WV but has received no response to date. EPA's Ft. Meade lab is also investigating the formaldehyde issue.

EPA Region 3 continues to monitor and provide oversight of facility activities at the Freedom Industries tank farm site and the Poca staging facility. EPA and WVDEP plan on collecting a sample from the seep on February 1, 2014.

Media Interest: Medium

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-01-30/west-virginia-chemical-spill-mystery-who-runs-freedom-industries>

The HQ EOC will continue to monitor and provide updates as needed.

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